



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA Administrator Barreto Seeks Nominees 2004 *New Freedom Initiative* Awards

WASHINGTON – U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator Hector V. Barreto today urged small businesses that have used innovative strategies to enhance the workplace environment and expand job opportunities for people with disabilities to submit their entries for the 2004 *New Freedom Initiative* Awards.

President George W. Bush launched the annual award program, which is aimed at recognizing public-private partnerships and programs that have employed the use of innovative training, hiring and retention techniques to create a positive and measurable impact on the employment of people with disabilities. It also recognizes those partnerships, programs and individuals that develop strategies to support Americans with disabilities as they enter and advance in the work force of the 21st century.

“This initiative offers a helping hand for Americans with disabilities to create their own legacy of accomplishment and success,” said Barreto. “President Bush has emphasized the importance of making sure that everyone has an opportunity to be an active participant in the American Dream. The *New Freedom Initiative* recipients are outstanding examples of individuals and organizations that deeply value the contributions of people with disabilities, while working to create opportunities to allow these Americans to reveal their greatest potential.”

Additional information on the awards and the specific nomination criteria are available in the February 27, 2004 *Federal Register* or online at www.dol.gov/odep under the *New Freedom Initiative* tab. Information also is available by calling the office of Disability Employment Policy at the Department of Labor at (202) 693-7880. The nomination deadline is May 21, 2004.

President Bush introduced the New Freedom Initiative on Feb. 1, 2001. The program includes a comprehensive set of proposals designed to ensure that Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work and make choices about their daily lives while participating fully in their communities.

Nominees eligible for the award include individuals, businesses (both large and small), and nonprofit organizations. There were 10 award recipients in 2003, including one individual, four nonprofit organizations and five businesses.

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